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CATHOLIC SITUATION IN THE GDR

La Gaceta del Norte  
Bilbao, 20 Aug 1953

Berlin (special correspondent) - The most recent editorial of the Petrusblatt, weekly newspaper of the Berlin diocese, discusses the new policy of the GDR Government; the editor is of the opinion that this policy will not give true religious freedom to Christians in the GDR.

Even if pressure against the Catholic Church is not strong there is little hope of improved relations between the Church and the GDR government.

To support this opinion, the Petrusblatt cites the words of Walter Ulbricht who stated, in a meeting of the Central Committee of the party /SED/ last month, that a systematic program of raising the cultural level would have to be instituted, which would stress the natural sciences in order to eliminate the reactionary influence of the Church and clergy on youth.

The Central Committee has stated, furthermore, that the SED will continue to fight the churches of the imperialists; and will not guarantee Christian education in the schools, freedom of the Catholic press, and the religious and cultural activity of the Church among youth.

There has been some increase in the number of priests available in the GDR, although, the number of priests are inadequate for the 2 million Catholics in this area. Since 1 December 1951, new priests ordained in West Germany for service in the GDR were not allowed to conduct services, but this prohibition has now been lifted.

East German Catholics have only one weekly newspaper, the Tag des Herrn, published by Benno House in Leipzig. However, the GDR authorities have further restricted circulation of the paper by curtailing its supply of paper. Reviews and parish bulletins from West Germany are forbidden in the GDR.

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